



**The Meir Amit  
Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center**

March 14, 2012

## **Iranian Involvement in the Marches to Israel's Borders Planned for March 30, 2012<sup>1</sup>**

### **Overview**

1. **A number of simultaneous marches to Israel's borders from the various Arab countries are planned for March 30, 2012**, referring to themselves as part of **the Global March to Jerusalem (GMJ)**. The marches are expected to take place in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. The anti-Israeli boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign is also planning a so-called "global activity day," combining propaganda events in various places around the world with Land Day, marked by Israeli Arabs. The organizers of the events set up **committees and umbrella networks in the various countries** to deal with logistic deployment and propaganda.
2. Evidence in our possession indicates **that Iran openly and with its own propaganda supports the March 30 events and is also involved in organizational preparations for the marches**. To that end it employs proxies, including organizations and individuals, affiliated with Iran.
3. Iranian support for the marches and its involvement in their preparations are **additional proof of the event's extremist character**. That is also manifested by the involvement of **Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, extremist organizations in Asia and the terrorist organizations** (such as Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad) in the preparations. In our assessment the radical Islamic nature of the marches **casts a shadow over the participation of various Western human rights organizations and NGOs, and may even make them reconsider**. In addition, the presence of extremist Middle Eastern elements in the planned events, especially in the Lebanese

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<sup>1</sup>Update of the February 22, 2012 bulletin "The organizations participating in the campaign to delegitimize Israel plan a series of propaganda events on Land Day, March 30, 2012, to challenge Israel and attract media attention. Among the events planned are a potentially violent march to Israel's borders from the neighboring countries and worldwide BDS activities" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/hamas\\_e153.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e153.pdf).

sector, **heightens the potential for violence and provocation**, despite the fact that the march organizers have **repeatedly stated that they will be non-violent**.

4. To summarize, there is evidence that **Iran, both directly and through its proxies, supports the marches and possibly additional propaganda events planned for March 30**. In our assessment, Iran has a number of objectives: to strengthen its regional influence by exploiting the sensitivity of the Arab-Muslim world to the issue of Jerusalem, to draw international attention away from itself, and to broaden and deepen the delegitimization campaign being waged against Israel by channeling it to Iran's own political needs.

#### **Summary of Information about Iranian Involvement in the Marches**

5. The following is a summary of the information in our possession, updated March 13, about Iranian direct and indirect involvement in the marches planned for March 30:

1) A February 26, 2012 Fars News Agency item **quoted Khamenei as supporting the march to Jerusalem**. He said Iran should openly support movements and groups operating against Israel. Support for the marches to Jerusalem was presented as **part of a new strategy** designed to increase regional unity against Israel, based on the so-called "resistance axis" [i.e., Syria and the terrorist organizations] and opposition to the so-called "occupation" of Jerusalem (Fars News Agency, Iran, February 26, 2012). In the same vein, Ghazanfar Asl Roknabadi, the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, said he hoped all "Palestine" would shortly be liberated from its "Zionist occupiers" and **that cries of "Allahu Akbar" would be heard throughout Rehavia** [an elite neighborhood in West Jerusalem] (ISNA, March 4, 2012).

2) In Iran as well as in other countries, **a local committee was appointed to make preparations for the marches**, called **The Board of the Global [March] to Jerusalem in Iran**. Its head is **Hossein Shaikhol-Eslam**, described as **secretary of the Board and march coordinator for Iran**. In addition, the **umbrella organizations** directing the project have **two Iranian participants**, in our assessment handled and directed by the Iranian regime. One of them is **Saleem Ghafuri**, an Iranian who was spokesman for the Asian March and is now, according to the Fars News Agency, head of the GM2J **Board of Executives**. The other is the aforementioned **Hossein Shaikhol-Eslam**, secretary of the board of the Global March to Jerusalem (both quoted in the Fars News item on February 26, see below).

The screenshot shows the Fars News Agency website interface. At the top, there is a logo for FARS NEWS AGENCY and the Persian text 'خبرگزاری فارس'. Below the logo, there are navigation links for Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and English, along with the date '5 Rabi Al-Thani 1433 / Tuesday 28 Feb 2012 / 09 Esfand 1390' and the location 'Tehran - 16:27 / GMT - 12:57'. The main content area features a news article with the following details:

- News number:** 9010176198
- Time:** 14:45 | 2012-02-26
- Category:** Politics
- Section-Header:** 'Global March to Jerusalem' Forms Board in Iran
- Text:** TEHRAN (FNA)- The board for the Global March to Jerusalem took shape in a meeting of the representatives of different groups that support Palestine.
- Image:** An aerial view of a large, modern building complex, likely the headquarters of the board.
- Text:** In light of the recent speech of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei regarding Iran's open support for different movements or groups against Israel, Hossein Shaikhol-Eslam, the Secretary of the Board for the Global March to Jerusalem (GMJ), emphasized that the Global March to Jerusalem is a symbol representing the protests of the different movements from the free nations of the world against the occupation, oppression, injustice and Judaization of Jerusalem.
- Text:** Yet, he underlined that the present step needs to be taken into consideration by all anti-Zionist groups.
- Text:** Dr. Ruivaran, a regional analyst and another member of the board of the Global Jerusalem to Jerusalem in Iran, also stated at the meeting (which took place in the office of Ummat-e-Wahida) that the new strategy offered by the Supreme Leader is based on the new regional boundaries and the unity on the basis of the axis of resistance and opposition towards the occupying regime of Jerusalem.
- Text:** He stated this strategy is in opposition to the proposed strategies from some Arab governments in the region that wish to divide the region based on religious differences.
- Text:** He said it is on this basis that the support of the Global March to Jerusalem is a strategic step towards strengthening unity against Israel in the region.
- Text:** Seyed Saleem Ghafuri, the Head of the Board of Executives for the Global March to Jerusalem, announced the arrival of the caravan in Iran as 24th of Esfand (March 14).
- Text:** He stated that the movement which consists of different nations will go towards the boundaries of the occupying regime from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. In their masses, alongside the Palestinian refugees which reside in the mentioned countries, on the 10th of Farvardin (March 30), they will go towards the closest possible point to Jerusalem.
- Text:** He emphasized that the special quality in this movement is that it consists of people from different creeds and religions of the world who stand united believing that Jerusalem is a city holy for all religions.
- Text:** He stressed that this action has led to the built up of fear in the occupying regime of Jerusalem.

Screen capture of the original Fars News Agency item (English.farsnews.com website)

3) The **Internet Haganah website**, run by American professionals specializing in the analysis of jihadist Internet sites, examined the GM2J website and **found indications of Iranian involvement in the marches**. They found three domains of march organizers **sharing an IP address with Ahl al-Bayt**, an **Iranian institution directed by Khamenei's office** which spreads Shi'ite and Khomeini ideology around the globe. It is headed by **Khojat el-Eslam Mohammed Hassan Akhtari**, the former Iranian ambassador to Syria. Ahl al-Bayt has **an active branch in Britain**. It has connections to another Iranian-oriented organizations operating in Britain, the Islamic Centre of England, one of the organizations participating in London's annual Iranian-initiated Jerusalem Day (For further information about the Ahl al-Bayt institution, pro-Iranian bodies and individuals operating in Britain and their connection to GM2J, see the Appendix.).

4) **Seyed Saleem Ghafuri**, an Iranian participating in organizing the GMJ, told the Fars website that the [Asian] **convoy was expected to arrive in Iran on March 14** (Fars News Agency, Iran, February 26, 2012). From Iran **it planned to continue on to Turkey and from there to Lebanon**.<sup>2</sup> The previous Asian convoy left Iran in December 2011 and **passed through Iran on its way to the Gaza Strip**. Its visit to Iran was exploited for

<sup>2</sup>Awamibharat.blogspot.com.

meetings with senior members of the Iranian regime and to defame Israel (with an occasional anti-Semitic aside) and the West, while showering praise on the Iranians.<sup>3</sup> In our assessment the convoy's stay in Iran will again be exploited to the the same end.



The Iranian regime exploits the Asian convoy's December 2010 visit for propaganda. Left: The American and British flags burned during a reception for the convoy activists, held in Palestine Square in the heart of Tehran (IRNA, December 14, 2010). Right: Iranian president Ahmadinejad delivers a speech to the members of the convoy (Mehr News Agency, December 13, 2010).

5) In Lebanon Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, two overtly Iranian-oriented terrorist organizations, are involved in organizing the march. **Sheikh Abd al-Majid Omar, the Hezbollah representative, and Abu Imad al-Rifa'i, from the PIJ,** participated in a meeting which took place on February 21, 2012 in **Hamas headquarters in a southern suburb of Beirut**. Also present were representatives from other Islamist bodies in Lebanon. They examined the possibility of holding a mass march to the Israeli-Lebanese border similar to the one held on May 15, 2011 (the Nakba Day march, which ended with casualties). A committee was appointed to contact various elements with the objective of enlisting as many Lebanese and Palestinians as possible to participate in the march (Al-Safir, February 23, 2012). In addition, several members of the Lebanese parliament attended a coordination meeting held in the Lebanese city of Tyre on March 1, among them **Hezbollah's Nawwaf al-Musawi** (GM2J Arabic website).

6) An Iranian website connected, in our assessment, to the Iranian regime, initiated a **cartoon contest in support of the marches**. The cartoons are supposed to deal with the theme of **the so-called "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees and with opposition to the so-called "occupation" of Jerusalem**. Each of the three winning entries will receive a prize of \$1000 and a trophy. Entries are to be sent to **the Irancartoon.com website, the same site which on August 14, 2006, a few months before the Holocaust denial**

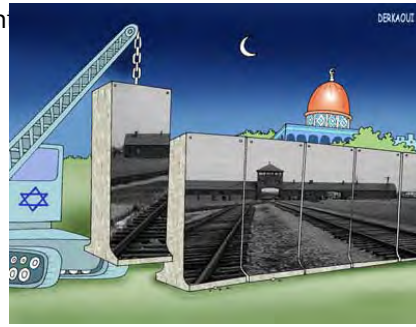
<sup>3</sup>For further information see the December 12, 2012 bulletin "A convoy from India and other Asian countries left New Delhi to reach the Gaza Strip at the end of December. Among the participants are extreme leftist and Islamic activists who were joined by human rights activists..." at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/ipc\\_e146.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e146.pdf).

convention was held in Tehran, announced a contest for anti-Semitic, Holocaust



A Palestinian wearing the striped suit of an Auschwitz concentration camp inmate, submitted by Carlos Latif, a Brazilian who runs an anti-Semitic blog.

Two of the winning en



The Israeli security fence Judea and Samaria to prevent suicide bombing attacks compared to the electrified fences around Auschwitz, submitted by Abdallah al-Darqawi, Morocco.

**"International Return to Home Cartoon Contest 2012"**

In support of the "Global March to Jerusalem" and the march of the representatives of various nations towards occupied Palestine's borders, "International Return to Home Cartoon Contest 2012" will be held:

**Themes & Subjects:**

- Right of the displaced Palestinians to return to their homeland.
- Protest to occupation of the Jerusalem as the holy land of all religions.

**Regulation:**

- participant can send maximum 5 artworks.
- Sending (Name, family name, post address, Email address and Telephone) of artists Just by word file is necessary.
- The catalogue will be send to the entire artist that their artworks published in the catalogue.
- Artworks must be in 200 dpi by width or length of 2000 pixel by jpg format.
- Subject of [Return to Home] must be mentioned in the send Email.

**Prizes:**

3 selected works will be awarded for each person:  
1000 \$ with Honorable mention & Trophy  
And 5 selected works will be awarded for each person:  
Honorable mention & Trophy

**Deadline: 30th Apr., 2012**

**Address for sending artworks:**  
[Info@irancartoon.com](mailto:Info@irancartoon.com)

Screen capture of the Irancartoon.com announcement of the competition. It includes a reference to the armed campaign against Israel (the assault rifle) and the "popular campaign" (the rifle formed fromf stones.).

### Iran's Cartoon House to Hold Contest in Support of GMJ

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's Cartoon House plans to hold a cartoon contest in support of the Global March to Jerusalem, a movement for the freedom of the Holy Quds.



Announcement of the cartoon contest in support of the GMJ issued by the Fars News Agency, Tehran, Iran

7) **The Iranian English-language Press TV channel was also enlisted to promote a propaganda campaign for the marches.** On January 8, 2012, a video was posted on YouTube to promote the marches, produced by Press TV and **featuring George Galloway**, who gave his blessing to the marches, which, he said, would promote the return of the Palestinians to what [the Israelis] called Israel. Press TV also broadcast a conference call between George Galloway and a pro-Palestinian anti-Israeli Indian activist named Feroze Mithiborwala, an organizer of the Asian convoy and of the GMJ (YouTube). In addition, **a Facebook page was opened in Farsi for the GMJ** (Facebook.com/Farsi).



**George Galloway in the Press TV video, part of the propaganda campaign for the marches (YouTube)**

8) Another manifestation of **Iranian participation in the GMJ propaganda campaign** was an open letter, in our assessment planted by the Iranian regime, posted on the marches' website on March 5, purportedly written by Iranian Jews. Its heading was the **Society of Iranian Jewry Supporting GMJ** and it was signed by two Iranian Jews, one a Jewish member of the Majlis (the Iranian parliament) and the other a Jewish leader. In it the Society of Iranian Jewry expressed support for what the letter called a global demonstration in support of the liberation of Jerusalem from the Zionists, which was planned for March 30.<sup>4</sup>

6. For institutions and activists in Britain affiliated with Iran and their connection to the planned marches, see the Appendix.

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<sup>4</sup>Aser Iran website, March 6, 2012/

## Appendix

### The Ahl al-Bayt Institution in Britain and Its Connection to the March 30 Marches Campaign

1. The **Internet Haganah website**, run by American professionals specializing in the analysis of jihadist Internet sites around the world, recently examined the Internet address of the organizers of the marches to Jerusalem (GM2J). A probable connection between Iran and the marches' organizers was found.
2. The Internet Haganah site posted an article entitled "**An Islamic Republic of Iran Connection to the Global March to Jerusalem?**"<sup>5</sup> According to the article, three domains of march organizers were found to **share an IP address with Ahl al-Bayt** (aimislam.com), whose postings and Facebook page **clearly link it to Iran** (articles about Khamenei, support for the Syrian regime, defense of Iran's nuclear program, etc.).
3. Internet Haganah examination also revealed that the Ahl al-Bayt website and two GM2J Internet addresses are **registered to one of Ahl al-Bayt's central activists, Sheikh Shabbir Hassan Ali**. He is listed as the owner of the hosting server whose address is server01.mubahela.net,<sup>6</sup> the host server for the Ahl al-Bayt site and both the GM2J.com and GM2J.net sites, the sites of the Global March to Jerusalem.
4. **The Ahl al-Bayt<sup>7</sup> World Assembly** is known to be an **Iranian-oriented** institute which spreads Shi'ite Islam and the ideology of Khomeini throughout dozens of countries under **the direction of the office of the Supreme Leader** (Khamenei). It is headed by Khojat el-Eslam Mohammed Hassan Akhtari, **the former Iranian ambassador to Syria**. Ahl al-Bayt has a **branch in Britain** called the **Ahlulbayt Islamic Mission**. **It is the largest organization of its kind in Britain, and deals with spreading Shi'ite Islam and the ideology of the Ayatollah Khomeini**. The British branch, in our assessment orchestrated by Iran, is involved in the march campaign and **possibly other propaganda campaigns planned for March 30**.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://forum.internet-haganah.com/showthread.php?608>

<sup>6</sup>The term *mubahela* comes from the Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran, Verse 61, which can be interpreted to mean that a mutual oath given during a confrontation between two groups or rival individuals invokes a divine curse upon the side which is later found to have lied. Thus, according to Islam, when two groups of Muslims are in conflict, they are to pray to Allah to curse whoever does not speak the truth. **The verse is particularly important for the Shi'ites**, because they regard it as proof of the *i'smah* (**immunity from mistakes and transgression**) of **Ali and his exclusive right to inherit the prophet Muhammad after his death**. One interpretation suggests that the Sunnis are cursed because they did not accept Ali as Muhammad's heir. See <http://mdhasan.tripod.com/Ali/chap24.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>*Ahl al-Bayt* means "the family of the prophet Muhammad," but **for Shi'ites its significance is far more important**. They regard the relatives of the prophet Muhammad as the legitimate heirs to the Islamic nation. The Sunnis, on the other hand, claim that the *sahba*, the comrades of the prophet Muhammad who accompanied him at the dawn of Islam and his rightful heirs, and not his descendants.

5. **Sheikh Shabbir Hassan Ali**, who owns the hosting server used by the GM2J website, is **Ahl al-Bayt's most prominent activist**. He spoke at a joint conference held by Ahl al-Bayt and the **Islamic Centre of England**, a Shi'ite religious-cultural center in London which opened in 1988 to promote Khomeini's ideology in Britain. **The Centre participates in the annual Iran-initiated Jerusalem Day events in Britain**. During Jerusalem Day last year, held in London on August 21, 2011, **conspicuous were calls for the destruction of Israel**, shows of **solidarity with Hezbollah and support for Hamas and its path of terrorism** (the so-called "resistance").



Jerusalem Day in Trafalgar Square in London, August 21, 2011 (Richard Millet's blog)

6. **Sheikh Shabbir Hassan Ali** expressed his ideology **in London on February 12, 2011**, at the conference held to mark the anniversary of Islamic Revolution in Iran. The convention was organized by Ahl al-Bayt and the Islamic Centre of England, and **the sheikh spoke standing next to the Iranian flag** (See picture below). He praised the Islamic Revolution in Iran and expressed hope that the "cancer" which had occupied Palestine [i.e., Israel] would soon be removed.<sup>8</sup>



Sheikh Shabbir Hassan Ali speaking at the conference in February 2011, standing next to the Iranian flag (YouTube.com)

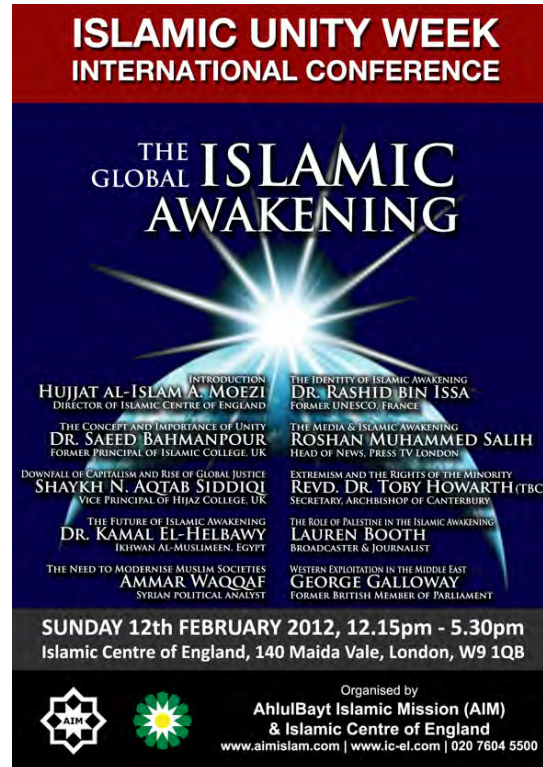
7. Islamic extremists, both Shi'ite and Sunni, were present at the February 12, 2012 conference, along with anti-Israeli British activists. Among the speakers were **George Galloway** (a former British MP, anti-Israeli and affiliated with the extreme left, an organizer of the campaign to send convoys to

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<sup>8</sup>YouTube.com



Gaza Strip and a participant in the GM2J), convert to Islam **Lauren Booth**<sup>9</sup> (correspondent and presenter on Iran's English Press TV, hostile to Israel, supports the "right" of Hamas to the so-called "resistance," active in the GM2J and half sister to Cheri Blair) and **Muhammed Saleh** (director of Press TV, Britain).



Poster disseminated by Ahl al-Bayt in preparation for the conference in London on February 12, 2012

## Participation of Two Iranians in the Umbrella Networks Organizing the Marches

8. There are **two Iranians** in the umbrella networks organizing the marches, who, in our assessment, **are working under guidance from the Iranian regime**. The first, **Sayed Saleem Ghafuri, is the Iranian representative in the GM2J international central committee**.<sup>10</sup> He is an **Iranian** who previously served as spokesman for the December 2010 Asian convoy, which was exploited for a public relations campaign by the Iranian regime as it passed through Iran. Evidence of Ghafuri's activities for Iran can be found on the GMJ website, where he is described as **involved in**

<sup>9</sup>**Lauren Booth** made a speech at the Jerusalem Day events which took place in Trafalgar Square on August 21, 2011. She condemned what she called "Israeli crimes," called for "the liberation of Jerusalem," expressed support for Hamas and the so-called right to resist the Israeli "occupation," and ended her speech with the cry "We are Muslims" (YouTube).

<sup>10</sup>According to Fars News Agency, Iran, his role is described as head of the Board of Executives for the Global March to Jerusalem.

**promoting Iranian interests in Kashmir and as active in Latin America** (See photo below, where his name is spelled differently).



**Salim Ghafouri**

*Salim Ghafouri* from Iran sits on the GMJ International Central Committee. Ghafouri acted as **spokesman** for the 2010 Asia to Gaza convoy. According to him, the "war with the Zionists" is not only an "Islamic-Zionist war," but the showdown between the "truth," represented by "the freedom-loving people of the world," and the "lie," represented by Israel and its supporters. Ghafouri also appears to be involved in **advancing Iranian interests** in Kashmir and has **represented** the 'Iranian House of Latin America' on visits to Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua.

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**Twitter Updates**

Sara Murasek, #GMJ organizer, has a soft spot for Hizballah's Hasan Nasrallah. See why here. <http://t.co/F8gryYJN> 27 minutes ago

Must read article by @adamlevick on the danger of the Global March to Jerusalem #GMJ via @JewishPress <http://t.co/NVPI1E1W> 1 hour ago

#### Personal details about Saleem Ghafuri from the CiF Watch website

9. Another activist, whose role was **described by the Fars News Agency as Secretary of the Board to the Global March to Jerusalem**,<sup>11</sup> is **Hossein Shaikhol-Eslam**. He is the same individual mentioned on the marches' Facebook page as the convoy's coordinator in Iran. He is apparently an employee of the Iranian foreign ministry and served in a number of different capacities in the past. He has been the general manager for the international affairs bureau of the Iranian Majlis, Iran's ambassador to Syria, the deputy foreign minister of Iran and secretary of the international committee to support the Palestinian intifada (his identity needs to be verified further).

<sup>11</sup>His role has also been described as a member of the GMJ's consulting committee. See CiF Watch Special Report: Extremists & terror supporters organizing "Global March to Jerusalem"...[cifawatch.com/2012/02/10](http://cifawatch.com/2012/02/10).